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## Despite private utilities.....

Co-operatives have provided electricity to rural areas in Victoria and the U.S.A. because private utilities wouldn't. While Victoria's butter co-ops ceased providing electricity, in the U.S.A. electric co-ops have flourished since the 1930's.

There are over 1000 electric co-operatives in the U.S.A. owned by their 12 million consumer-members and serving a total population of 25 million with 60,000 full time equivalent workers.

The co-operatives are democratic with one vote per member irrespective of their energy usage. Boards of the co-operatives are elected annually and each year 10,000 co-operative managers, directors and members attend the annual general meeting of the National Rural Electric Co-operative Association.

The co-operatives work for their members and their communities - sponsoring the development of telephone and water co-operatives, satellite television, rural health and economic development. The co-operatives established their own bank in 1969. Generation and Transmission Co-ops are providing 47% of power needs. The co-ops are also involved in renewable energy.

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## CO-OPERATIVE UTILITIES

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# Economic Co-operation

Co-operative utilities are a middle way - instead of private and public ownership. Twenty percent of Australians are members of co-operatives.

## Ethical Basis

Co-operatives are based on an ethical philosophy and practice - an alternative to profit driven private enterprise. Co-operatives are committed to the common good - serving their members and their communities.

## Democratic Control

Co-operatives are democratic with one vote per member irrespective of their shareholding. Co-operatives, then, create economic democracy - complementing political democracy. In private companies, control is exercised by the minority who own the majority of shares.

## Australian Ownership

Co-operatives guarantee Australian ownership. The shares of a co-operative are not tradable and cannot be bought and sold on the stock exchange. The shares are also of a constant value.

## Consumer Empowerment

Co-operatives empower consumers by enabling them to own and control their own utilities. Co-

operative utilities enable householders to exercise a choice in the market place. It is a choice that is not possible with private utilities.

## Employee Empowerment

Co-operatives can empower utility workers by creating a new industrial relations environment based on co-operation between electric providers and consumers - working together for the co-operative option.

Green  
Energy  
C o -  
operatives

Co-operatives protect the dignity and rights of the individual and serve the common good.

offer the possibility of developing green energy options such as solar & wind power

## Community Development

Co-operatives are committed to economic development - achieving social goals through economic democracy. Co-operatives deny there is a choice between economic and social goals.

## Non-profit

Co-operatives provide a service for their members. They aren't established to make profits for investors.

# Succeeding with co-operation

The campaign against privatisation of public utilities is based on a commitment to essential services being under public ownership. This assumes that the public interest is guaranteed through public ownership.

Historically, the common good has also been pursued by co-operatives since the 19th C - meeting the mutual needs of workers, farmers and communities through agricultural, child care, credit, dispensary, health and housing co-operatives.

Whether or not the sale of electric utilities is inevitable, there is the choice of working for co-operative ownership. Do we dare to succeed with co-operative ownership?

The Victorian Government and the Labor Opposition are ignoring the co-operative option for utilities. Is this because neither wants to empower consumers and workers - and their communities?

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